

## BENEFIT AMOUNTS

### HOW ARE MY MONTHLY BENEFITS CALCULATED?

Basic Food benefits are an additional support to supplement the income that your family spends each month on food. Your benefits are determined using limits set by the federal government.

### WHY ARE MY BENEFITS SO LOW?

When we figure out your monthly benefit amount, all of the following are considered:

- The number of people in your household
- Your income
- Your living expenses like
  - Rent
  - Mortgage
  - Utilities
  - Childcare / Dependent care
  - Child support you pay
  - Medical costs for an elderly or disabled person in your household

Households with higher income or lower living expenses receive a lower monthly benefit. The calculation required by the federal government may cause some people to be eligible for the minimum \$14 and sometimes even zero dollars per month.

### IS IT WORTH IT TO KEEP MY BASIC FOOD IF I WOULD RECEIVE ONLY ZERO OR \$14.00?

Only you can decide if Basic Food is helpful for your family. When deciding, please consider:

- If your income goes down or your expenses go up, you can call and report this change so we can see if this would increase your benefits. You will not have to reapply or have another interview.
- School-aged children in your household are **automatically enrolled** in the free school meals program – no additional work is required to sign up. Many Basic Food families get the free meals and would not qualify if they applied directly at the school.
- You are eligible for low-cost local phone service through the Washington Telephone Assistance Program (WTAP). Call 1-888-700-8800 for more information or call your phone service provider to sign up. Your provider will need your client ID number, social security number, and date of birth.
- Your family meets the Women Infants and Children (WIC) income test. If you have an infant or toddler in your household, you can use your Basic Food award letter to verify that you meet the WIC income test. To find the WIC office nearest you, call the Family Health Hotline at 1-800-322-2588.

### HOW ARE MY MONTHLY BENEFITS CALCULATED?

- First, we subtract allowable deductions from your income. These deductions include living expenses like rent, mortgage, utilities, childcare and child support. Then, we calculate your household benefit by subtracting 30% of the remaining income from the maximum monthly benefit for your household size. The maximum is usually received by households with little to no income. Most families receive an amount somewhere in the middle. The **average** monthly benefit families received in 2007 was \$181.18
- The **maximum** monthly benefits are:

<u>Household Size</u>	<u>Maximum Monthly Benefit</u>	<u>Household Size</u>	<u>Maximum Monthly Benefit</u>
1	\$176	6	\$838
2	\$323	7	\$926
3	\$463	8	\$1058
4	\$588	9	\$1190
5	\$698	Each Additional Person	Add \$132

## QUESTIONS & ANSWERS ON BASIC FOOD



- The **lowest** monthly benefit for a household of **one or two persons** is \$14.
- If your household has three or more persons, there is no minimum benefit. You *could* be approved for a monthly benefit of zero, but may still receive the related benefits described above, such as free school meals.

### HOW BENEFITS ARE DELIVERED

#### HOW AND WHEN DO I RECEIVE MY MONTHLY BASIC FOOD BENEFITS?

When your application is approved, you are given an Electronic Benefits Transfer (EBT) card. It looks like a debit or credit card. Each month, we issue benefits onto your account by the tenth day of each month. The dates vary from the 1<sup>st</sup> to the 10<sup>th</sup> depending on the last number for your Basic Food case. If the last number of your case is one (1), you will get your benefits on the 1st, if it is two (2) you get your benefits on the 2nd and so on.

#### DO MY BENEFITS EXPIRE IF I DON'T USE THEM IN THE MONTH THEY ARE ISSUED?

Any benefits remaining in your EBT account at the end of the month are carried over into the next month. However, if you have not used your food benefits **at all** for one year, we must begin the process of permanently removing your Basic Food benefits from your EBT account.

### USING BASIC FOOD BENEFITS

#### WHERE CAN I USE BASIC FOOD BENEFITS?

You can use your Basic Food benefits at any grocery store, convenience store, or discount retailers that accept Basic Food or Food Stamp benefits. Most of these stores, including the major chains, accept Basic Food. Many farmers markets also accept Basic Food benefits through the EBT card. Please look for the EBT logo on the door or the cash register.

#### CAN I USE MY EBT CARD IN ANOTHER STATE?

Yes, a Washington EBT Quest Card can be used in all states. If you move out of the state, you will need to tell us about the move and apply for benefits in the new state where you will live.

#### CAN I HAVE SOMEONE USE MY CARD TO BUY FOOD FOR ME?

If you want someone else to have access to benefits for your household, you can set them up as an alternate card holder. This person would receive an EBT card and be able to use it to purchase food for you.

#### WHAT CAN I BUY WITH BASIC FOOD BENEFITS?

You **can** use Basic Food benefits to buy food for the people in your household to eat such as:

- Breads and cereals
- Fruits and vegetables
- Cheese, milk and other dairy products
- Meats, fish, poultry and eggs
- Most other food items that are not hot prepared foods
- Seeds and plants which produce food for your household

You **cannot** use Basic Food benefits to buy:

Any nonfood items, such as:

- Pet foods
- Soaps, paper products
- Household supplies
- Vitamins or medicines
- Food that will be eaten in the store
- Hot foods
- Beer, wine, liquor, cigarettes or tobacco